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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the services provided by instructional aides, Chapter I teaching aides and teaching assistants, educational therapy aides (special education), and attendance aides in the District of Columbia public schools, 1982-83. Teachers and principals rated very highly the value of the paraprofessional services. Teachers surveyed were 8 to 1 and principals surveyed 24 to 1 in favor of continuing paraprofessional services as opposed to selecting services, materials, or equipment of equal dollar value. The majority of teachers stated that paraprofessional services could not be equated with a dollar value and were far more valuable than materials or equipment, while the majority of principals stated that paraprofessionals brought both a personal dimension and direct services to students. The majority of instructional paraprofessionals saw their greatest accomplishment as being able to help students to acquire desired skills, while for attendance aides it was getting truants to attend school. Gains in promotions and gains in test results increased from 1982 to 1983, but because of the many variables involved it can only be said that student performance improved during the year in which the number of paraprofessionals was increased. Attendance rates also improved after the assignment of attendance aides. (CMG)

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# ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY PARAPROFESSIONALS

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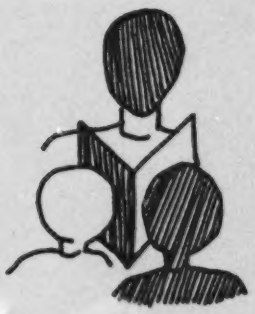

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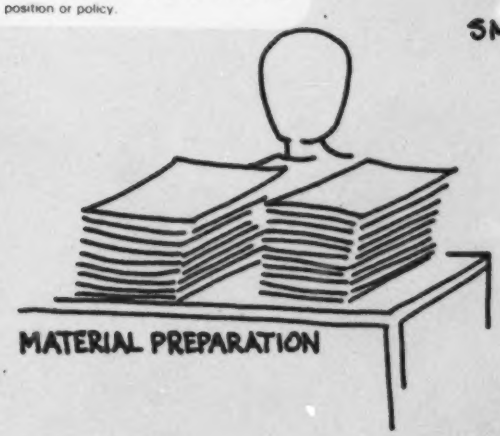

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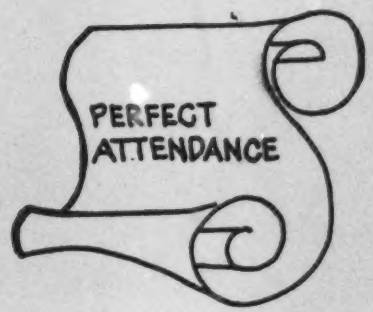


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FLORETTA D. McKENZIE
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

JULY 1983

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY PARAPROFESSIONALS

Prepared by
Division of Quality Assurance
(Research and Evaluation)
July 1983

District of Columbia Public Schools

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. Background

It was reported in Newsweek (July 26, 1971) that the nation's first major experiment in the use of teacher aides in public school classrooms was in 1953 and that almost immediately the program demonstrated that paraprofessionals could liberate teachers from certain distracting and time-consuming tasks. Over the past thirty years the use of paraprofessionals has become a viable and integral part of educational programs to the extent that budgets permit. Research shows that teacher aides perform a variety of duties, enable teachers to devote more time to instruction and are preferred by teachers over equal dollars in equipment and materials.

## B. Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess the services provided during school year 1982-83 by instructional aides, Chapter 1 educational aides, Chapter 1 teaching assistants, educational therapy assistants (Special Education) and attendance aides. Instructional aides and attendance aides were placed in schools in September 1982 to render services in the instructional and the attendance programs.

## C. Procedure

Questionnaires were developed to obtain data from all of the paraprofessionals listed above as to their sex, school level assignment, educational attainment, experience with children, special training, duties and assignments, problems encountered, on the job accomplishments and opinions on how to improve the program.

Questionnaires were also developed for principals as the instructional leaders of their school and for teachers, who generally are responsible for the guidance of classroom aides. These two questionnaires provided data on the assignment pattern of paraprofessionals within the school, relationship problems, tasks performed by aides and the value of the services performed. All questionnaires were distributed in March 1983 to be completed and returned by April 12, 1983.

This report is designed to give a brief description of the services provided by paraprofessionals during school year 1982-83 and to present the consensus of opinions and other supporting evidence as to the value of those services.

## II. RESULTS

### A. Instructional Aides

Instructional aides were assigned to schools in the fall of 1982. They were to perform a variety of duties, both instructional and non-instructional, thus enabling teachers to devote more time and attention to professional functions.

1. **Allocation and Assignment Criteria.** A total of 247 instructional aides were allocated to the four regions of the school system.

   - **Region A:** Elementary Schools - 36
     Junior High Schools - 24
     Senior High Schools - 8
   - **Region B:** Elementary Schools - 18
     Junior High Schools - 12
     Senior High Schools - 14
   - **Region C:** Elementary Schools - 25
     Junior High Schools - 16
     Senior High Schools - 20
   - **Region D:** Elementary Schools - 37
     Junior High Schools - 23
     Senior High Schools - 14

   Aides were assigned to elementary schools within each region on the basis of the following considerations:

   - Schools with special instructional programs that required additional support;
   - Schools with achievement scores in the lowest quartile of the city as measured by criterion and/or norm- referenced tests;
   - Schools with classes which exceeded the established pupil-teacher ratio, but for which the school's average pupil-teacher ratio did not justify additional teachers; or
   - One aide per school.

For assignment to secondary schools the considerations were:

- o Schools with special programs that required additional instructional support (i.e., skills labs, remedial reading and mathematics programs, etc.); and
- o Schools with low achievement as measured by norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests.

2. **Responses of Instructional Aides.** One hundred eighteen (47.8%) of the 247 instructional aides responded to the questionnnaire. Of those responding 80 were assigned to elementary schools; 9 to schools with both an elementary and junior high school program; 19 to junior high schools; and 10 to senior high schools. Ninety-nine (83.9%) of the respondents were female.

- o 56 instructional aides (47.5%) reported having had one or more years of college.
- o 33 or 28.0% had prior training as an elementary or secondary school teacher.
- o 15 or 12.7% had an average of 7.5 years prior experience as a teacher working with children.
- o 51 or 43.2% had an average of 5.9 years prior experience as a paraprofessional working with children.
- o Only 8 or 6.8% stated that they had no prior experience working with children.
- o 90 or 76.3% had pre-service and/or in-service training for their present position.
- o 44 or 37.3% reported that they were assigned to at least four different teachers.

3. **Classroom Teachers' Responses.** Completed questionnaires were received from 363 regular school teachers. Of that number 309 (85.1%) were elementary school classroom teachers; 5 (1.4%) were classroom teachers in a school with both an elementary and junior high program; 21 (5.8%) were secondary school classroom teachers; and 28 (7.7%) were non-classroom elementary and secondary teachers (reading resource, math resource, etc.).

- o 124 or 34.2% of the teachers reported that they had the services of an instructional aide (103 stated that the services were on a shared-time basis).
- o Teachers received an average of ten hours of instructional aides' services weekly.
- o Teachers indicated that the aides performed a variety of instructional and non-instructional tasks.

4. **Principals' Responses.** Questionnaires were received from 107 regular school principals (76 elementary schools, 11 schools with an elementary and junior high school program, 16 junior high schools, and 4 senior high schools).

- o The greater number of elementary school principals and principals of schools with elementary/junior high school programs had one instructional aide assigned. For junior high school the greater number had two and for senior high, four.
- o The majority of the principals stated that their instructional aide received pre-service or in-service training.
- o 47 or 43.9% of the principals indicated that they had an insufficient number of instructional aides.

## B. Chapter 1 Educational Aides and Teaching Assistants

Educational aides and teaching assistants were assigned to Chapter 1 schools to assist teachers of identified Chapter 1 students. Educational aides worked a full day and teaching assistants were WAE employees who worked part-time.

1. **Responses of Educational Aides and Teaching Assistants.** Questionnaires were returned by 174 (59.0%) of the 295 educational aides and 30 (27.0%) of the 111 teaching assistants. Over ninety percent of those responding in each group were females.

- o 33.3% of the educational aides and 26.7% of the teaching assistants reported having had one or more years of college.

- o 51 or 29.3% of the educational aides and 7 or 23.3% of the teaching assistants had prior training as an elementary or secondary school teacher.

- o 9 or 5.2% of the educational aides and 4 or 13.3% of the teaching assistants had an average of 8.7 and 3.0 years, respectively, as a teacher working with children.

- o 124 or 71.3% of the educational aides and 15 or 50.0% of the teaching assistants had an average of 12.0 and 4.3 years, respectively, as a paraprofessional working with children.

- o Only 14 or 8.0% of the educational aides and 1 or 3.3% of the teaching assistants had no prior experience working with children.

- o All of the educational aides and 27 or 90.0% of the teaching assistants had pre-service and/or in-service training.

- o 54 or 31.0% of the educational aides and 13 or 43.3% of the teachers assistants were assigned to an average of three teachers.

- o 97 or 55.7% of the educational aides and 16 or 53.3% of the teaching assistants reported that they were assigned to one teacher.

2. **Classroom Teachers' Responses.** The 363 regular school teachers responded to questions relating to Chapter 1 educational aides, Chapter 1 teaching assistants and instructional aides on the same questionnaire.

   - o 257 or 70.8% of the teachers had the services of Chapter 1 educational aides and/or teaching assistants.

   - o Teachers received an average of 15.6 hours of services weekly from the Chapter 1 aides and assistants.

   - o Teachers indicated that the educational aides and teaching assistants performed a variety of instructional and non-instructional tasks.

3. **Principals' Responses.** The 103 (the four senior principals are not included) regular school principals also responded to questions about Chapter 1

educational aides, Chapter 1 teaching assistants and instructional aides on the same questionnaire.

- The greater number of elementary school principals and principals of schools with elementary/junior high school programs had three educational aides or teaching assistants assigned. For junior high school the number was one per school.
- 32 or 31.1% of the elementary and junior high school principals indicated that they had an insufficient number of educational aides.
- 22 or 21.4% of the elementary and junior high school principals indicated that they had an insufficient number of teaching assistants.

## C. Educational Therapy Assistants

Educational therapy assistants were paraprofessionals assigned to special education schools. They were designated therapeutic assistants because of the services they render to students with special disabilities while performing the same services as instructional aides and educational aides. Eight special education centers were included in this assessment (Bundy, Fort Lincoln, Grimke, Mamie D. Lee, Mount Pleasant, Sharpe Health, Tyler and Prospect). A total of 114 therapy assistants were assigned to the eight centers.

1. **Responses of Educational Therapy Assistants.** Twenty-eight (24.6%) of the therapy assistants returned questionnaires. Of that number 22 (78.6%) were females.

   - 18 or 64.3% had one or more years of college.
   - 7 or 25.0% had training as an elementary or secondary school teacher.
   - 4 or 14.3% had an average of 7.3 years prior experience as a teacher working with children.

- o 16 or 57.1% had an average of 6.5 years prior experience as a paraprofessional working with children.
- o Only 1 or 3.6% stated no prior experience working with children.
- o 19 or 67.9% had pre-service and/or in-service training for their present position.
- o 7 or 25.0% were assigned to two or three teachers.
- o 17 or 60.7% were assigned to one teacher.

2. **Special Education Classroom Teachers' Responses.** Completed questionnaires were received from 62 (33.9%) of the 183 teachers in the eight special education centers.

- o 33 or 53.2% had the services of therapy assistants on a shared-time basis and 46.8% on a full-time basis.
- o Teachers received an average of 22.1 hours of therapy assistants' services weekly.
- o Teachers stated that therapy assistants performed a variety of instructional and non-instructional tasks.

3. **Special Education Principals' Responses.** Principals of four of the eight special education centers responded to the questionnaire.

- o Three principals stated they had a total of 6, 7 and 8 therapy assistants each assigned to their center. One principal did not give the number assigned.
- o All of the educational therapy assistants received pre-service or in-service training.
- o Each principal stated that there was an insufficient number of paraprofessionals assigned.

## D. Attendance Aides

For school year 1982-83 there was an emphasis on the improvement of attendance. The position of attendance aides was established for the secondary schools. The responsibilities of the attendance aides were in the areas of enrollment and attendance accounting.

1. **Assignment of Attendance Aides.** A total of 43 attendance aides were assigned to the secondary schools in December 1982.

- **Regular Schools:** Region A - 9 Attendance Aides
  Region B - 7 Attendance Aides
  Region C - 11 Attendance Aides
  Region D - 9 Attendance Aides
- **Career Development Centers** - 6 Attendance Aides
- **Special Education** - 1 Attendance Aide

2. **Responses of Attendance Aides.** Questionnaries were returned by 22 (51.2%) of the attendance aides (19 in regular secondary schools, 2 in career centers and 1 in special education). Sixteen (72.7%) of the respondents were females and six were males.

- 18 or 81.8% reported having had one or more years of college.
- 4 or 18.2% had training as an elementary or secondary school teacher.
- 2 or 9.1% had prior experience as a teacher working with children.
- 4 or 18.2% had prior experience as a paraprofessional.
- Only 2 aides reported no prior experience working with children.
- 16 or 72.7% reported having pre-service and/or in-service training.
- 12 or 54.5% reported that their immediate supervisor was the principal or assistant principal.
- 6 or 27.3% reported the counselor or attendance officer as their immediate supervisor.

3. **Secondary School Principals' Responses.** Responses relating to attendance aides were received from 24 principals (21 in regular schools, 3 in career development centers and 1 special education center principal).

- Each principal reported one educational aide assigned.
- Attendance aides performed a variety of tasks related to student attendance.

## E. Impact

In this section the rating and comment, given by principals and teachers, suggestions given by paraprofessionals, promotion results, testing results and attendance rates are given to show the impact of services rendered by paraprofessionals during school year 1982-83.

1. **Value of Paraprofessionals' Service.** Paraprofessionals listed their greatest accomplishment while principals and teachers rated the services provided by paraprofesssionals.

- On a scale of one to five (one equals **"of no value"** and five equals **"of great value"**) teachers gave an average rating of 4.2 as the value of the services received from paraprofessionals.
- Teachers were "8 to 1" in favor of continuing the services of a paraprofessional as opposed to selecting services, materials or equipment of equal dollar value.
- The majority of the teachers stated that the services of the paraprofessionals (the human relation and rapport, the one on one individualization, etc.) cannot be equated with a dollar value and are far more valuable than materials or equipment.
- On a scale of one to five (one equals **"of no value"** and five equals **"of great value"**) principals gave an average rating of 4.5 to indicate the value of the services rendered by paraprofessionals.
- Principals were "24 to 1" in favor of continuing the services of a paraprofessional as opposed to selecting services, materials or equipment of equal dollar value.
- The majority of the principals stated that the paraprofessionals bring that "personal" dimension to the learning process while providing direct services to the students.

- The majority of the instructional paraprofessional (instructional aides, educational aides, teaching assistants, and educational therapy assistants) stated that their greatest accomplishment was being able to help students acquire desired skills.

- The majority of the attendance aides stated that their greatest accomplishment was getting truants to attend school.

2. **Suggestions for Improvement.** Paraprofessionals were asked to state how their program could be improved.

   - The majority of the instructional paraprofessionals stated that more in-service training (workshops, accredited courses, etc.) is necessary to improve the program.

   - The majority of the attendance aides stated that there was a need to hire more aides and to make the position permanent.

3. **Promotion Results.** Substantial gains were made by students as shown when promotions are compared for 1982 and 1983. However, since there were many variables involved in the gains made by students, we can only say with confidence based upon available data that there was improvement in the performance of students during the year in which there was an increase in the number of paraprofessionals. The percentage of students promoted in June 1983 was greater than that of June 1982 for grades one through six.

**Percent Promoted**

| Grade | June 82 | June 83 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 81.9% | 85.9% |
| 2 | 82.8% | 90.7% |
| 3 | 82.7% | 91.9% |
| 4 | 81.4% | 92.9% |
| 5 | 70.2% | 91.9% |
| 6 | 85.2% | 96.5% |
| 1-6 | 80.7% | 91.5% |

4. **Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills Results.** Substantial gains were also made by students as shown in the CTBS results. An increase in the total reading and total mathematics median grade equivalents was shown for grades 3, 6, 9 and 11 from May 1982 to May 1983.

| | Total Reading | | Total Mathematics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade | May 1982 | May 1983 | May 1982 | May 1983 |
| 3 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 4.3 |
| 6 | 6.2 | 6.9 | 6.6 | 7.3 |
| 9 | 7.9 | 8.4 | 8.7 | 9.0 |
| 11 | 9.2 | 10.1 | 9.0 | 9.9 |

5. **Attendance Rates.** Improvement was also made in the attendance rate in the schools where attendance aides were assigned in 1982-83. Forty-three attendance aides were assigned to secondary schools based on the need for improving attendance. For those schools a comparison of attendance rates is shown for the months of April 1982 and April 1983. A comparison is also shown for December 1982 (the month attendance aides were assigned) and April 1983. April 1983 was the latest month for which almost 100% of the attendance data had been submitted.

**Average Attendance Rates**

| April 1982 | April 1983 | Difference |
|---|---|---|
| 81.2% | 83.0% | +1.8% |

| December 1982 | April 1983 | Difference |
|---|---|---|
| 81.9% | 83.0% | +1.1% |

The comparisons show an increase in the percentage of attendance for April 1983 over April 1982 (+1.8%) and December 1982 (+1.1%). Though the percentage differences appear small the number of students represented is noteworthy. For example, a difference of 562 students is represented by the 1.1% difference between December and April. These figures indicate that for every aide assigned to each school there was an average increase in attendance of thirteen students.